An Analysis of Tribal Culture and Ecology: A Case Study of Pakur District

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC

The culture and ecology of the tribes have been a subject of exploration and study for scholars in the field of human geography, anthropology and ecology. The tribal communities of Santhal Parganas have a unique way of life, which is interlinked with their ecological surroundings. Tribal culture and ecology are closely interrelated. Tribal communities have respect and value for the natural environment, which is important for their livelihoods and traditional practices. They have developed composite relationships with the natural environment, they use their traditional knowledge on ecosystem to sustainably produce resources such as diet, traditional remedies (medicine) and building materials without any adverse effect on environment.

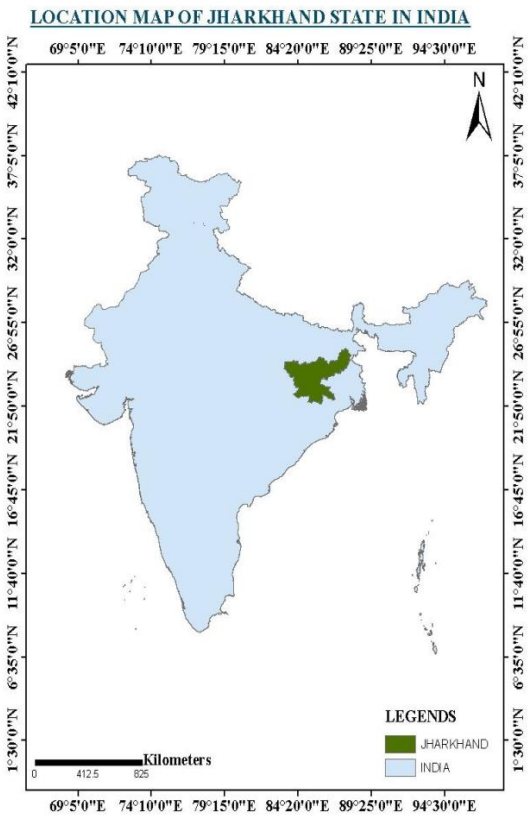
Tribal culture uses traditional ecological knowledge to manage their lands in harmony with nature which encourage the ethics of conservation and sustainability. Traditional ecological knowledge is a combination of traditional knowledge, customs, and beliefs inherited through generations, which includes skills in natural resource management, agricultural practices, and animal husbandry. Tribal cultures recognize human as a part of the ecosystem and not above it. They maintain a symbiotic relationship with the natural environment, they not only receive benefit from natural environment but also provide care and protection. The infiltration of modernization and colonialism has interrupted many traditional tribal cultures, triggering significant change to their environment and livelihood. Through integrating traditional ecological knowledge into protection and environmental management practices, it is possible to encourage both cultural and ecological sustainability for native people globally.

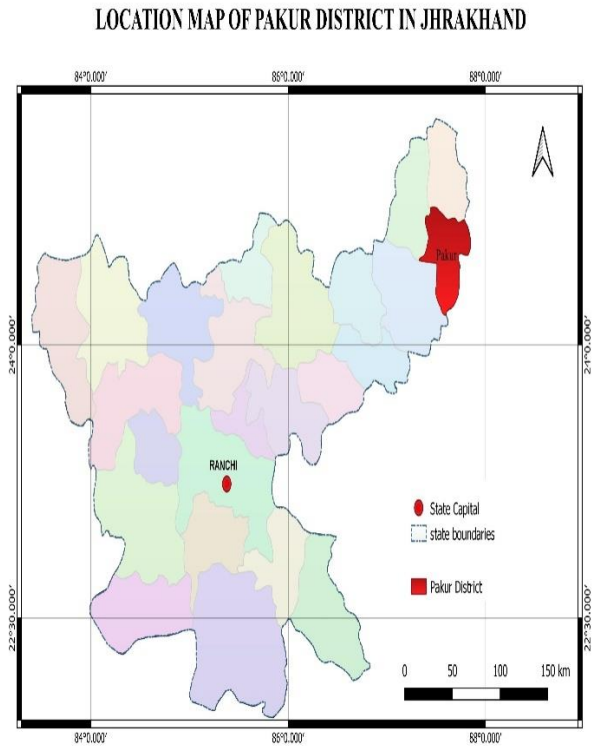
STATE OF THE ART

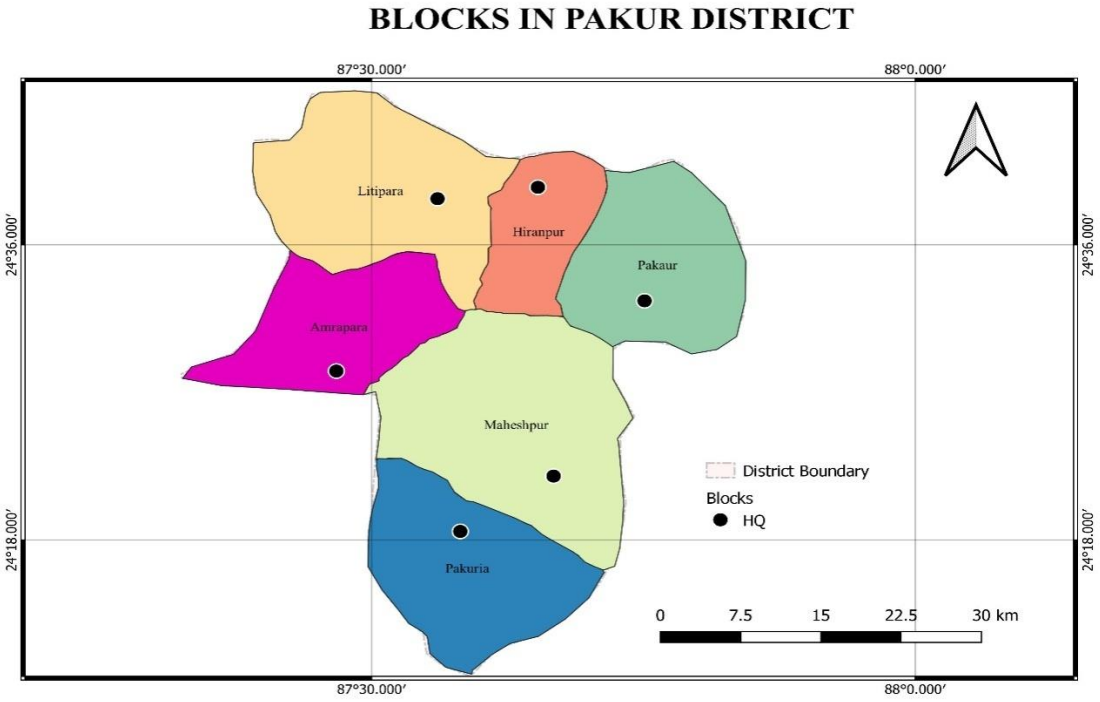
Pakur District is a district located in the state of Jharkhand, India. It was established on 28th January 1994. Pakur is the administrative headquarters of the district. The district covers a total area of approximately 686.21 square kilometers. It is bordered by Bihar in the north, Dumka District in the south, Sahibganj District in the east, and Godda District in the west. The district is divided into six blocks - Pakaur, Hiranpur, Littipara, and Amrapara, Maheshpur, Pakuria. Pakur District is known for its rich cultural heritage and natural resources. It is famous for its stone mining industry, with the district being one of the largest suppliers of black stone chips and other stone products in India. The stone mining industry has contributed significantly to the district's economy. The district has a predominantly rural population, with agriculture being the primary occupation of the people. The main crops grown in the region include paddy, maize, wheat, and lentils. Besides agriculture, small-scale industries like weaving, pottery, and handicrafts also play an essential role in the district's economy. Pakur District has several tourist attractions that attract visitors from all over the country. Some of the popular tourist spots include Raj Mahal, Kali Mandir, Narnura Temple, and the SiddoKanho Park. These attractions showcase the rich history and culture of the region. The district also faces several developmental challenges, including a lack of proper healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and basic infrastructure in some areas. Efforts are being made by the government and non-governmental organizations to address these challenges and promote the overall development of the district. Overall, Pakur District is a unique blend of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and economic potential. With its vast resources and potential for development, the district is working towards a brighter and prosperous future.

India, is home to several tribal communities, each with its own unique culture and traditions. Some of the major tribal communities living in Pakur District include Santhals, Paharias, Mal

Paharias, and Munda tribes. The Santhals, one of the largest tribal communities in the region, are known for their vibrant cultural practices. They have their own language, Santhali, and their art forms, such as music, dance, and painting, reflect their rich cultural heritage. The Santhal community also has a strong belief in animism, worshiping various natural elements and spirits. The Paharias and Mal Paharias are two other prominent tribal communities in Pakur District. They primarily inhabit the hilly areas and practice shifting cultivation. Their culture revolves around nature, and they have been able to preserve their distinct customs despite rapid modernization. The Munda tribe, although a minority practices in Pakur District, also has a significant presence. They are traditionally an agrarian community and practice both settled and shifting cultivation. The Munda people have their own language, Mundari, and are known for their vibrant dance forms, such as Chhau and Karma Naach. These tribal communities have a strong sense of communion or tribal leader playing a vital role in decision-making. They celebrate various festivals and rituals, typically involving dance, music, and traditional attire. Overall, the tribal culture of Pakur District reflects a deep connection with nature, strong community values, and a commitment to preserving traditional arts and customs. Despite facing challenges due to modernization and development, these tribes continue to maintain their distinct identity and cultural







Source: Census of India 2011.

The tribe of Pakur district have a rich tradition and their folklore includes myths, legends, and songs that relate to their beliefs, customs, and rituals. Their economy is based on agriculture, hunting, and gathering, and they have distinctive modes of land use and agriculture that revolve around their traditional knowledge of the forest. The Santhal people are also skilled artisans, creating beautiful handicrafts, and textiles incorporating traditional motifs and styles.

NCERT; Class XII: Themes in Indian history Part-III, **Colonialism and the Countryside Exploring Official Archives: (2019)** Santal tribe migrated from the Vardhaman region of West Bengal to Rajmahal hills during colonial period. Santhal tribe are mainly agricultural tribe which is found in Jharkhand and nearby states.

L.P Vidyarathi in **The Tribal Culture of India (1976)** has mentioned about tribal society which play a vital role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life that are considered as an economic asset to their society. He has applied fundamental research methodology to conclude his observations in the book. First part deals with anthropological studies and other part includes relevance of studies.

Nirmal Kumar Bose in his book **Tribal Life in India (1971)** utilizes descriptive research methodology to gives some insight into the tribe's social life and their social system. They have retained their own marriage regulation. Almost all marry within their restricted local group, and are sometimes guided by their own elders or political chief in internal and external affairs. They form socially distinct communities who have been designated as tribes and listed in the schedule for special treatment, so that they can come within the mainstream of political and economic life if India.

Alok Kumar in his Book **Tribal Culture and Economy (1986)** organization has attempted analytical research methodology to study and interpret the socio-cultural and economic structure of Mal-paharias tribe, Santal-parganas district Bihar in the light of regional

geographical complex. This book provides innate glimpse on the habit of Mal-paharias in regard to their dress, religious ceremonies, customs, hunting, agricultural instruments and musical instruments. Finally, the author observed the major requirements of their settlements and has opined that paying adequate attention to the facilities lacking in their settlements can hasten emerging of Mal-paharias in the mainstream of Indian life.

Archer's book The Hill of Flutes: Life and Poetry in Tribal India: A Portrait of the Santal (1974), is a document a collection of Santhali poetry, legends, stories, and aesthetics of dances, rituals, and their traditional festivals. In this he glorifies the oral tradition, language, poetry, music, paintings, folklores, rituals and customs of the Santhali. This book is an important document of Santhali people in British era.

W J Culshaw's book **"Tribal Heritage: A Study of Santals" (1949)** remains one of the most well written accounts of Santhali life and culture. It provides a detailed account of the Santal people and their life. The book is a result of the author's personal experience of living with Santals in the village of 12 Saregna, Banker district from 1932 to 1943. Culshaw expresses his fascination for the Santal society and culture and observes. In this book he explains their life style and closeness with nature. It also points out that how missioners doing their best for development of Santhali.

Mohan Singhin his thesis "**Socio-Economic Development of the Santhal Tribe of Bankura District (W.B)": A Geographical Study (2022)** The Santhali tribe are concentrated mostly along the Western and southern part of Bankura district over blocks of 'Khatra, Simlapal, Hirbandh and Ranibandh' etc. They are socially and culturally very bonded community with their unique customary laws and life style which varies in the context of food habits, costumes, marriage and festivals etc. But with advent of globalization, this uniqueness is getting diluted

as people are accepting and opting new cultural tracts. Santhali people over a decade's had shown increasing trend in literacy rate both in rural and urban areas in district.

Buddheshwar Tudu's book **"History of the Indian independence struggle of The Santhals" (2009)** present a historical aspect of Santhali community. In it he mentioned detail explanation of "Santhali Hool (1855)". He also described their poverty, tradition, culture and their modern ideology. It also represents "Santhali agitation causes and their consequences. It also shows how British and "Diku" exploited innocent Santhali people. How christen missionaries destroyed their original traditional culture.

Edwin Murmuin his thesis "**Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of Santhal tribe with special reference to biodiversity conservation and natural resource management in Jharkhand and West Bengal" (2019)**. Santhal community was playing a pivotal role in sustainably managing the resources of the region. Although, the conservation was epiphenomenal in nature i.e., conservation being effect of certain traditional beliefs and customary practices and not intended to conserve at the first place. Whatever the manner or purpose of the sustainable utilization of resources may be, if it results into conservation and management, it must be supported and encouraged rather than questioning the validity or scientific basis of such dogmatic traditions and ancient belief systems.

P.k. Mohanty in his book **"Development of Primitive Tribal Groups in India" (2002)** details explain problems and suggestion to sort out it. He mentions socio-economic development in tribal region and their effects on their life. It also compares the social development indicators among the primitive tribal groups and other developed tribal groups in the country.

PROBLEM IS TO BE INVESTIGATED

Due to land acquisition and displacement for developmental projects the tribes of Pakur district have faced significant challenges in recent years. In spite of this, they have remained committed to preserving their old traditional social culture and way of life.

The Pakur district has been plagued by various tribal issues for decades. Some of the major problems faced by the tribes. Many tribal communities in Pakur district do not have access to adequate educational facilities, leading to low literacy rates and limited employment opportunities. They have their traditional ecological knowledge. The absence of proper healthcare facilities and infrastructure poses a significant threat to the health and well-being of the tribals. They have their traditional knowledge of health care for limited diseases. One of the biggest issues faced by the tribal population in Pakur district is the lack of ownership of their land. The tribals have been living in these regions for generations, but due to the absence of proper land titles, they are often not considered as the legal owners of the land because culturally they do not maintain any kind of land record in the past, they inherited their ancestral land without any written or official documentation.

Overall, the lack of development and marginalization of tribal communities in Pakur district has resulted in widespread poverty, social and economic inequality, and human rights violations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION AND MOTIVATION

The main purpose of the research is to identify the problem of tribal societies and their ecological sense in day-to-day life. The research also examines the uniqueness of tribal culture and ecology.

The main objectives of research are as follow:

I. To understand the man and nature relationship and cultureof tribes of Pakur District.
II. To determine the Culture and Ecology which play important role in Socio-Economic & Health Conditions of tribes.
III. To examine the impact on exploitation of natural resources on Culture and Ecology (Economic activity) of tribes leading to loss of traditional knowledge and their health practices.
IV. To Find out the developmental programme running by the Government and NGOs for the development of Tribes in Pakur District.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS OR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Hypothesis refer to the pre conceived idea and intention to prove the idea. The hypothesis will lead to research work:

1. The natural environment plays a crucial role in shaping the cultural practices and beliefs of a tribe.

2. Socio-Economic development affect the Cultural and Ecological sustainability of tribe.

3. Government schemes are very helpful for the tribal development in Pakur district.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

a) **Selection of the Field:** To determine the appropriate research methodology in Pakur district several factors need to be consider such as research objectives, the available resources and nature of population in the district.

b) **Identification of Variables:** In first hypothesis natural environment is dependent variable and cultural practices and beliefs of tribe is independent variable. In second hypothesis socio-economic development is dependent variable Cultural and Ecological sustainability of tribe is independent variable.

c) **Sampling Design:** Determine the suitable sampling design to select a representative sample in Pakur district. This may involve using probability sampling technique in which simple random sampling will use.

d) **Sample Size:** The research will constitute the descriptive account of facts and findings so in sampling design probability sampling will use in which simple random sampling will be carried out with the help of questionnaire and personal interview by selecting 6 different villages 1 from each of the blocks. Target is 30 household (individual) from each village so sample size will be 30X6=180. Approximately 180 sample will be collected. The outcome (sample) will precise in **percentage or average of population.**

Research techniques used in my field work can be divided into three phases:

Pre-field: Consists of secondary data and information from journals, reports, available literatures, census report etc.

Field: Includes collection of primary data from randomly selected samples from different locations which will be subsequently verified with the secondary information already collected.

Post-field: Includes arranging, processing, tabulating and analysis of data and finally presenting them in graphical presentation and pictorial forms (maps and diagrams).

TENTATIVE CHAPTERISATION

Introduction

1. Geographical Background.
2. Demographic profile of tribes of Pakur District.
3. Tribal culture and ecology in study area.
4. Impact of Socio- Economic Development on Health, Culture and Ecology of tribes.
5. Loss of Cultural and Ecological entities of tribes.
6. Sample study on tribes of Pakur District.
7. Government schemes and problems in tribal development.

Conclusion and Policy Implication.

Reference / Bibliography.

Appendix.

SOURCES OF DATA AND TOOLS TO BE USED IN COLLECTION OF DATA

The study mainly addresses the tribal culture and ecology and levels of regional development and planning, on the basis of different identified indicators. Thus, this study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

Following tools and technique will be in the collection of data:

Primary sources:

- Primary Survey
- Questionnaires Survey

Secondary sources:

- Database provided by District Office
- Government Report
- Data gathered from relevant textbook
- Data gathered from published/unpublished research thesis journals
- District statistical handbook
- Toposheets
- GIS and remote sensing database comprising of land use and cover imageries

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis is an essential component of research in Pakur District and involves several techniques and methods.

Descriptive Survey analysis will be used for hypothesis testing.

Qualitative analysis will be used for cultural practices and believe of tribes of Pakur district.

In map analysis distribution of tribal population will be represent by choropleth map.

The analysis of forest cover area and deforestation will be done through GIS and Remote sensing.

For analysis of Government schemes which is helpful for tribal development in Pakur district the relevant data will be collect from government office at district or block level.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study of tribal culture and ecology is significant for several reasons. India has unique and diverse tribal culture which represent a significant part of human history. The study of tribal culture helps to preserve their heritage, language, traditions, and knowledge and the study of tribal ecology gives us a better understanding of their relationship with the environment and how we can learn from them to conserve natural resources. Tribal communities often live in remote and marginalized areas, and the study of their culture and ecology helps us to develop sustainable approaches to their development.

ITS RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT-DAY PROBLEM AND NEEDS TO THE SOCIETY

The basic difference between the non-tribal understanding of nature and that of the tribal understanding of nature. Tribal communities around the world exhibit unique cultural practices, customs, and beliefs that help us appreciate diversity amongst human societies. Furthermore, by studying tribal cultures' ecological knowledge and practices, we can learn crucial insights into sustainable living that can be incorporated into modern life. Many tribal cultures are facing the threat of extinction due to globalization and modernization. Therefore, studying their ways of life, customs, and traditions can help us preserve their cultural heritage for future generations.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

The research will add to the existing knowledge about tribal culture and ecology of tribes of Pakur District. Tribal communities have often faced discrimination and marginalization, and the study of their culture and ecology helps us to understand their unique challenges and work

towards social justice. This may involve advocating for their rights and supporting their participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives and environment.Through providing employment can empower them with traditional knowledge and skills needed to maintain their way of life and enhancing their economic opportunities. Overall, the study of tribal culture and ecology is essential for promoting cultural diversity, protecting the environment, and achieving sustainable development and social justice.

FUTURE WORK

Here are some possible future directions in tribal research:

- **Research on environmental governance**: Research that delves into tribal communities' relationship with their environment and governance systems can offer insights into how these communities' approach environmental protection and management. Such research can help identify best practices that can be implemented in other settings.
- **Health and well-being**: With the rise in lifestyle diseases, research that explores traditional medicinal systems and how these systems address healthcare can provide crucial insights towards improving public health. By examining how tribal communities traditionally address sickness and disease, researchers can identify alternative treatments that can improve healthcare in other settings
- **Ethnobiology and ecology**: Further research on the agricultural, ecological, and ethnobiological knowledge of tribal communities can have significant applications in fields such as botany, ecology, and agriculture. Such research can help us identify new methods for remedying environmental problems and developing sustainable agricultural practices.

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